

628 - 1944-1945

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Curios and Relics  
Furniture  
Beds  
Petersen House

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

RELICS OF LINCOLN'S DEATH-BED.

"This anxiety to get relics connected with General Grant reminds me of a circumstance which came to my notice in Washington City many years ago," remarked an old resident of the National Capital to a reporter yesterday. "I occupied a room in 1866, a rear parlor, on the first floor of the Tenth-st. house, opposite Ford's Theatre, in which Lincoln died. Secretary Stanton, I was informed, occupied the same room while the martyred President was in his dying agony. The President died in a smaller room, which was in the rear, opening from the passageway. A family named Petersen owned, or leased, the house—I forget which. In 1872 I called on the family and was informed by Mrs. Petersen, whose husband had died, that she intended breaking up housekeeping and selling her furniture. She had stored away in a closet since Lincoln's death the bed clothes, mattress, etc., on which the President lay. The sheet and pillow-case were stained with his blood. Mrs. Petersen said that she did not like to sell them at public auction, and thought that the Government or some friend of Lincoln would like to preserve them. I called the attention of the city editor of *The Washington Chronicle* to the matter and he published a brief article relating the circumstance, and the next day some patriotic citizen called on the widow and paid her a good round sum for the relics. Where they now are I know not. I thought at the time that it was strange that the articles should have been allowed to remain where they were so long a time.

"The Petersens were an unlucky family. There were a father, wife, son and two daughters. They never prospered after Lincoln's death. The father committed suicide and his family became comparatively poor."

*Relics of Lincoln's death-bed - Petersen*  
*May 26 1882*

# MEMENTOES OF LINCOLN.

The Bedstead Upon Which the Martyred President Died—Other Interesting Relics.

There is a historic bit of furniture in this city that at this particular time perhaps merits a little attention, writes a Syracuse correspondent of the New York Times. It is a bedstead, a very ordinary-looking wooden bedstead, which cost in war times, about \$5. It is by no means as good as new, yet its possessor would not part with it for many times the amount of its original cost. Upon this bedstead President Lincoln died. When Mr. Lincoln was shot he was carried out of Ford's Theater and across the street to a house occupied by William Petersen, a tailor. He was laid upon the tailor's bedstead, which was of the variety known as French, the head and foot being alike, the ornamentation consisting of a lot of perpendicular wooden rungs. Petersen was only of moderate height, whereas Mr. Lincoln was very tall, and his bearers saw at a glance that the bedstead was too short for him. A number of the rungs in the footboard were broken away, and through the hole thus made the President's feet were stuck.

Until long after President Lincoln was laid in his grave the bedstead on which he died attracted no particular attention. Its owner was too prosaic a person to appreciate the fact that it had been ennobled by Lincoln's dying moments, but he finally realized the fact through the gradually increasing stream of callers who halted at his doorway and requested permission to visit the room in which President Lincoln died.

A very ordinary, not to say common, room this was. The most, if not the only, attractive thing in it was a small engraving of President Lincoln. The shabby-looking bureau soon became even shabbier, as nearly every caller became a relic-hunter, and slyly clipped off a piece of the old bureau when opportunity offered. Finally the bureau, the engraving, and a drop-light that was in the room at the time of the President's death were purchased by Colonel William H. Boyd, of Washington.

Colonel Boyd soon afterward informed his cousin, Andrew Boyd, of this city, of his purchase. The Syracuse man at once became fired with the ambition to possess as many relics of Lincoln as he could obtain. On November 4, 1873, he bought the bedstead, the straw-tick, and the mattress upon which President Lincoln died. He bought them from a resident of Washington named Frank Milliken, who surrendered at the same time a certificate that he had been given

when he made the original purchase.

The certificate is already of a yellowish hue. It reads as follows:

"Be it remembered that, on the 10th day of November, A.D. 1871, before me, the subscriber, one of the Notaries Public in and for the District of Columbia, personally appeared Ferdinand Petersen, personally well known to me, who, being sworn according to law, deposes and says that the bed purchased October 30, 1871, at the auction sale of the furniture of Mrs. Paterson, mother of the affiant, was the identical bed on which President Lincoln died on the 15th day of April, A.D. 1865. I state this from personal knowledge, and from having seen said bed daily from the time of said President's death up to the date of said sale."

The certificate is signed by Ferdinand Petersen, and was subscribed and sworn to before James T. K. Plant, on the date mentioned in it. Mr. Boyd paid \$100 for the bedstead. He has also in his possession a piece of the topcoat worn by President Lincoln when he was shot by Booth. He also possesses a report of a survey that Mr. Lincoln made in November, 1836, of thirty acres of timber land.

A more interesting relic, owned by Mr. Boyd, is the original of the letter written by President Lincoln to his law partner, W. H. Herndon, the night before he took his seat in Congress. The letter relates to a fee of \$10 paid to him by a client. In it Mr. Lincoln asks his partner to give the man credit for the amount. He adds: "This paper is too thick to fold, which is the reason I send only a half sheet." It is signed, "Yours as ever, A. Lincoln," and dated "December 5, 1847."

Considerable correspondence passed between Mr. Herndon and Mr. Boyd. In a letter dated December 29, 1869, Mr. Herndon wrote: "Speaking about 'the old cog in the wheel,' let me say there is philosophy in the kick—namely: Mr. Lincoln went to mill, hitched his old mare to the shaft, she was walking round and round, grinding out the corn too slowly to suit Lincoln. He fixed his mind on saying, 'Get up, you old devil,' and when he had uttered 'Get up,' he struck the old mare with a switch. At the striking she kicked Lincoln. He was struck or kicked badly on the head, and was taken up and sent home senseless. He lay so for some hours, and when he awoke to consciousness he finished the sentence, saying 'You old devil.' Can you explain? If so, send explanation to me. Why did he finish the sentence just then, or at all?"

# MAN IN WHOSE BED LINCOLN DIED IS NOW IN ALMSHOUSE HERE

*N.Y. Times*  
Friends of Thomas Proctor,  
Once Well-Known Lawyer, Now  
a Pauper, Confirm Story.

*Oct 1 1921*  
LIVED OPPOSITE THEATRE

Directed Men Bearing President  
to the House After Shooting,  
Old Man Tells Visitor.

CAN'T RECALL DETAILS NOW

Histories Vague on Points Revealed  
by Persons Who Knew of the  
Incident Years Ago.

Thomas Proctor, in whose bed Abraham Lincoln is said to have died, is a pauper in the City Home on Blackwell's Island. He was formerly a lawyer of standing in the city and an amateur naturalist, having been a friend of John Burroughs. A breakdown of his health about ten years ago caused him to lose his grip and in 1915 he became an inmate of the City Home.

Proctor, when 17 years old, was a clerk in the War Department and had a room in the lodging house opposite Ford's Theatre, where Lincoln was shot by Wilkes Booth, as set forth in the story told by him and corroborated with some detail by his friends. On returning from an entertainment, Proctor reached the lodging house in Tenth Street shortly after 10 P. M., just as a number of men crossed the street, carrying the form of Lincoln, already unconscious from a bullet in the brain. Proctor directed the party to his room, where the President was laid upon his bed.

According to his story, said to be corroborated by a contemporary woodcut of the death-bed scene, Proctor was in the room at 7:20 o'clock the following morning when the President breathed his last. Proctor, in thus probably one of the two surviving witnesses of the death of Abraham Lincoln, the other being his son, Robert Lincoln.

Owner of House Confirms Story.

James S. Kelly, a sculptor, living in the West Side Y. M. C. A., who visited Proctor on Blackwell's Island last Sunday in order to get the old man's impressions of the group around the death-bed, said yesterday that he had been informed by Osborne H. Oldroyd, present owner of the house where Lincoln died and owner of a collection of Lincoln relics, that Proctor had been the

occupant of the room and was present at the death of Lincoln. Timothy Daly of 238 Adelphi Street, Brooklyn, said yesterday that twenty years ago Proctor, then an active and able lawyer, had first told him the story. He added that Proctor never sought to make capital of the incident and told only a few intimate friends about it.

During his career as a lawyer Proctor was associated with Frederic R. Coudert Sr., Lord, Day & Lord, and Matthew Daly, Eugene F. Daly and Daniel Daly. As a naturalist and botanist Proctor occasionally made scientific trips with Burroughs and other scientists, according to Mr. Daly. He said that an American naturalist, Nicholas Pike, had named a newly discovered bug after Proctor.

The well-known histories of Abraham Lincoln are silent on the subject of the occupant of the room in which Lincoln died and are contradictory in their descriptions of the room itself.

The memory of the old man is faint on most topics, and yesterday he could do little more than hold the thread of a conversation for a few sentences. He was in Ward I. A number of old men, standing in a silent group outside the door of the long building, nodded when Proctor was asked for, and pointed to another old man sitting on a chair between the eighth and ninth cots from the door.

Says He Recalls Lincoln's Death.

He was a thin old man of middle height, with short white hair, a white mustache and thin, slightly florid face. He was bareheaded, a farmer's hat of coarse straw, with big brim, lying on the coat beside him. He wore the uniform khaki coat and trousers, with his pajama coat visible underneath, and gray socks falling around the top of army shoes. When asked whether he remembered the death of Lincoln, he said:

"Oh, yes, indeed. He died in my room. That is quite true. I stayed there all night and was there when he died."

He thought hard on the subject, wrinkling his brow and evidently causing himself pain, when he tried to recollect the details.

Mr. Daly had said that twenty years ago, when Proctor's mind was normal, he had said he shared the room with a young army officer then assigned to duty in the War Department, where Proctor was employed in a civilian capacity. The old man was not clear on that point. At the question whether his family lived in the same house, the white eyebrows contracted into broken lines, as he again tried to look backward into the almost complete darkness of his memory. Finally he said that he thought his parents had lived there, too. He added that his father, Richard, was a ship captain who had been around the world several times, and said that his parents were still living, a statement which indicated his vague grasp of things, because this would make them well over 100 years old. When asked about the others present, he said, "I can't remember now. Some days I can remember, but I can't today."





[TRIBUNE Photo.]

**IN MEMORY OF LINCOLN.** Actual relics of the martyred President and his family were used in the ceremony in honor of his birthday by the Chicago Historical society. The photograph shows Miss Georgene Faulkner, who told the story of "The Real Lincoln," in a dress frequently worn by Mrs. Lin-

coln and looking at the bed in which Lincoln slept. Covering the bed is the flag which hung from the Peterson home in Washington, where the President died. Left to right in the picture are Janet Hall, Oscar Anderson, Miss Faulkner, Madeline Ceriale, June Valley, Nixon Farnowsky, and Mary Farnowsky.

ILLINOIS MEMENTOES OF GREAT  
EMANCIPATOR DRAW ADMIRERS*Chicago Tribune* 2-12-27  
*Common Edition*

Death Bed of Martyred President Is Shrine for Chicagoans  
—Springfield Visitor Witnessed Lincoln's Marriage—Burn-  
ing of Proclamation Freeing Slaves in 1871 Is Recalled.

CHICAGO, February 12 (A.P.)—As to a shrine, pilgrims went today to the Chicago Historical Society to view the bed in which Abraham Lincoln died of wounds inflicted by an assassin; to see the shawl he wore while President, and other mementoes of the great man in Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky gave to the nation.

Many other Chicagoans helped swell the throng moving into Springfield for the meeting of the Lincoln Centennial Association at the tomb of the emancipator. Among the Springfield visitors was Galus Paddock, age ninety-one, St. Louis, who witnessed the marriage of Lincoln to Mary Todd in the Illinois capital in 1842.

On the 118th anniversary of Lincoln's birth in a log cabin in Kentucky, men who knew him recalled today his many-sided nature as incidents of his life were told and retold.

The burning of the original copy of the emancipation proclamation, by which Lincoln freed the slaves, when the great fire of 1871 swept Chicago, was recalled by Captain Nelson Thomasson, commander of the military Order of the Loyal Legion in Illinois. That document was destroyed with the building of the Historical Society.

"The first time I ever saw Lin-

coln," said Captain Thomasson, "was about the year 1858. My father and I were sitting on a little balcony over the northeast corner of Clark and Randolph streets (now the site of a skyscraper in which the Associated Press has its Chicago offices). My father, looking east on Randolph, suddenly cried out, 'There's old Abe Lincoln.' He said to me, 'Put on your hat and we will go and see him if he stops at the Sherman house,' which he did across the street. But, of course, Mr. Lincoln had hardly stepped down the several steps leading to the Sherman when he was surrounded by quite a number of admirers who seemed to spring from the ground and the planked sidewalks. Then I saw him daily for three weeks in 1860."

The captain recalled the stirring Republican national convention of 1860 in the Wigwag—a hall that long since has vanished—in Chicago, when Lincoln was nominated for the presidency. Afterward Lincoln wished the attorney-general to appoint the captain's father, W. P. Thomasson, a former member of the congress from Louisville, Ky., to a federal office in Kentucky.

John Hay, private secretary to President Lincoln, was a cousin and warm friend of Captain Thomasson. Thomasson was often at the executive mansion in Washington.

One morning Lincoln dropped into the basement, used as a telegraph office, of the old war department building, where Thomasson and some friends were whiling time away. The President started to write on a telegraph blank.

"Young gentlemen, when do you use a semi-colon?" he asked them.

"Villard (who afterward became president of the Northern Pacific railroad) and Hitt were our 'literary cusses,' and they quickly said a lot," the captain remembered. "But Lincoln, after taking the pen from his mouth, said, 'I never use it much, but when I am in doubt what to use, I generally employ the "little fellow."'

"John Hay always said," the captain recalled, "that Lincoln popularized the crisp bacon that we now have at our daily breakfast."

BACON



## VIEW BED ON WHICH A. LINCOLN DIED

(Associated Press).

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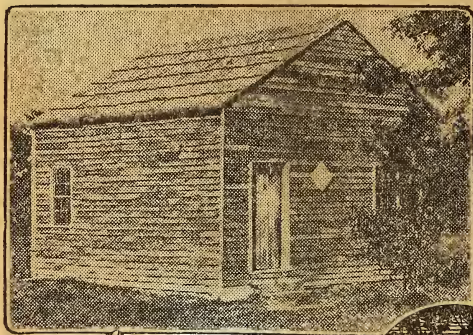
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## WAYS YOUNG LINCOLN WALKED



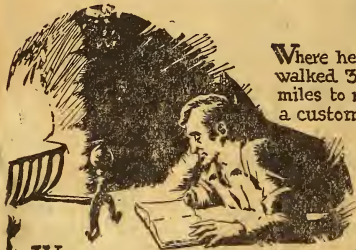
*The* restored Lincoln and  
Berry store



It was in Salem  
where Lincoln met  
love and tragedy



Where he  
walked 3  
miles to repay  
a customer



Where he  
read Blackstone  
by the light  
of the fireplace



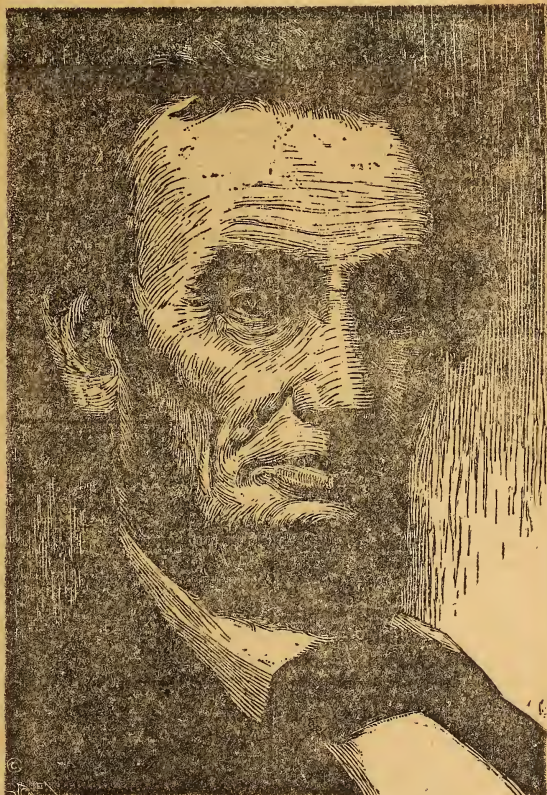
Where he  
practiced  
surveying



*The* bend in  
Sangamon river  
which changed the  
course in Lincoln's life



## Bed on Which Lincoln Died Shrine for Many Pilgrims



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Feb 12 1927

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#### Slave Proclamation Burned

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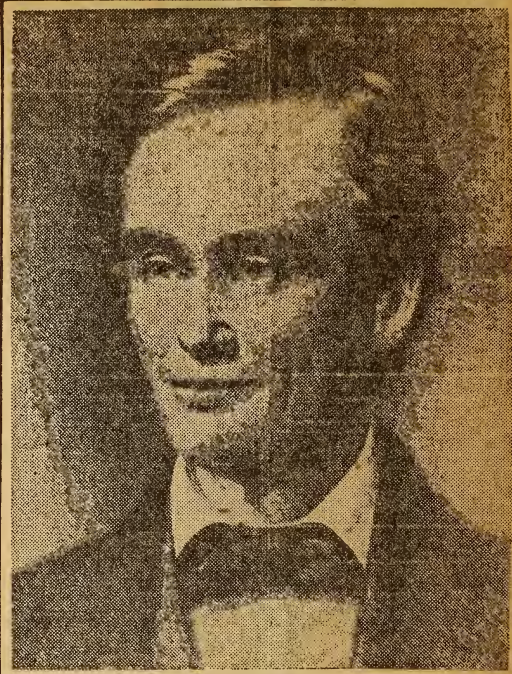
#### Pond of Crisp Bacon

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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN AS A YOUTH



Here is a copy of a rare portrait of Abraham Lincoln. It reveals him at twenty-one, a bright-faced and not altogether unband-some youth, whose features show plainly the indications of the strong and beautiful character to which the world now pays homage.

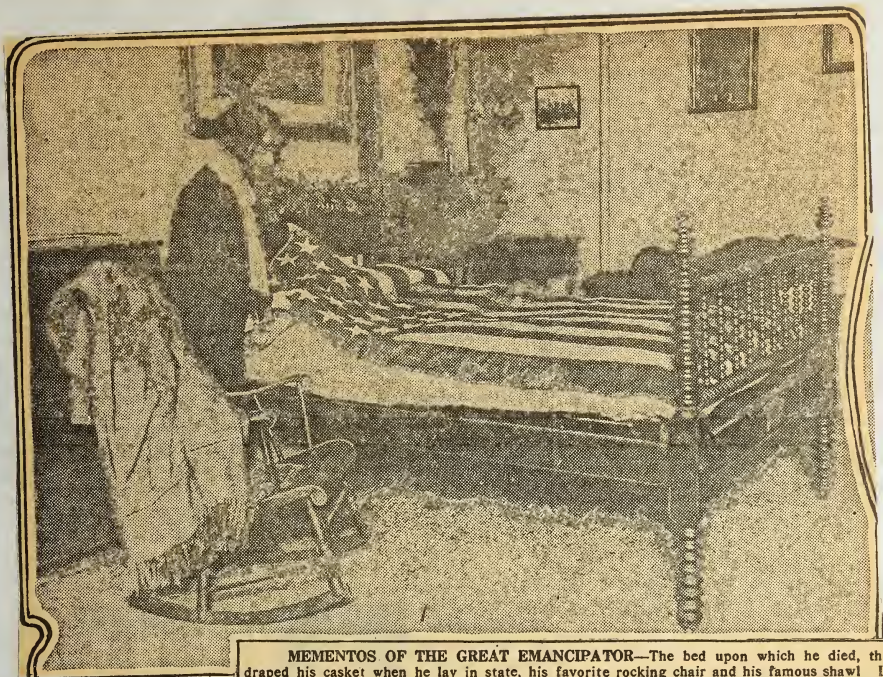
## Lincoln Bed Shrine Drawing Big Crowd In Chicago Today

Associated Press  
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**MEMENTOS OF THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR**—The bed upon which he died, the flag that draped his casket when he lay in state, his favorite rocking chair and his famous shawl. In the other picture, his silk hat and umbrella and the chair he used when he was in Congress. These are a part of the Lincoln collection in the Chicago Historical Society's Museum 2-12-27 Photos by Acme



### THE DEATH BED OF LINCOLN

Noted for his impersonations of Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Lincoln H. Caswell of New York examines the flag which draped Lincoln's coffin and the bed in which "Honest Abe" died.

## HEAR 'LINCOLN' AT LA GRANGE

The poet who once, with poetic license, remarked that "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" was not so far wrong.

He walked and also spoke last evening in the person of Dr. Lincoln H. Caswell of New York, widely known impersonator of the great emancipator, at the La Grange Legion Sunday Evening Club.

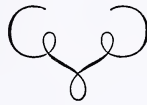
Dr. Caswell is pastor of the Cornell Memorial Church of New York but, because of his remarkable resemblance to Lincoln, is often called upon to make lecture tours. His forte is telling humorous stories for which Lincoln was noted. He stopped at the La Salle Hotel while here, visiting, too, with his sisters, Mrs. Stella Kingery and Mrs. Julia Whitcomb of Oak Park.

CHICAGO ILL. AMERICAN  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1930.

THE UNLOCKED BOOK

A Memoir of John Wilkes Booth  
by his sister Asia Booth Clarke

*with a foreword by*  
Eleanor Farjeon



Faber and Faber Limited  
24 Russell Square  
London

1938



FROM ASIA'S BOOK OF CUTTINGS

not forget he may have been the chosen instrument of a higher Power to work out some grand, mysterious end. Let them remember that without a Judas there would have been no atonement, and we poor sinners might still be floundering on in the dark and dusty way leading to eternal death.

What seemed almost like a singular fatality in connection with the death of Mr. Lincoln, he met his death in a theatre at the hands of an actor, and what is not generally known, he died in an actor's bed. In a house immediately opposite the theatre is a small back room, which had been occupied by the writer during the greater part of the season of '64 and '65.

The apartment was long and narrow, and was divided from the entry by a glass door, covered with a curtain on the inside. A plain bureau, a small wood stove, a wash-stand, a few chairs and a bedstead, completed the furniture of the room. Immediately above the bed was a picture of an Italian woman playing on a guitar, and a little boy clinging to her as she is playing to some rude soldiers in the verandah of a wayside inn. Beyond this, hung the celebrated engraving of Miss Bonheur's 'Horse Fair'. 'The Village Farrier,' at the extreme end of the room, completed the decorations on the walls. It was into this humble apartment Mr. Lincoln was carried after the horrible scene at the theatre. By this time a squadron of cavalry had taken possession of the street, and were keeping the people back. Deep threats of burning the theatre and hanging



THE ASSASSINATION, BY CHARLES WARWICK  
everyone belonging to it, were fiercely uttered in the crowd, and it required the most determined vigilance on the part of the military to prevent them carrying out the threat.

The most singular circumstance in this connection remains to be told. A few days before the fatal event, Mr. Booth called in to see me in this apartment during my illness. It was a wet, chilly day, and he told me he had been in the saddle ever since morning, and felt extremely tired. His appearance bore out the truth of his statement, for his heavy riding-boots were splashed clear to the tops, and his coat skirts were soiled with mud and rain. I invited him to take off his boots and dry his feet by the fire. He accepted the invitation—took off his spurs and hung them from the gas-fixture on the wall, and, filling my pipe, which lay upon the table, threw himself on the bed, and smoked himself into a profound and peaceful sleep, which lasted until evening. Could the most visionary writer of fiction imagine anything more singular than this? Who would think, to look upon that handsome face, so calm and peaceful in repose, that beneath it slumbered a volcano that in a few short weeks would shake the nation to its utmost centre? Who could raise the curtain of the near future and peer upon the picture of the dying President on that very bed? During a visit to Washington last Winter, I was irresistibly impelled to visit the old room. The place was just as I left it six years ago; and as I sat there alone in the gathering twilight,

William Lincoln Palmer  
Genealogist  
P. O. Box 123, Boston, Massachusetts

146 Mass. ave

Feb'y 26/  
38

Boston Globe

Feb 25/38

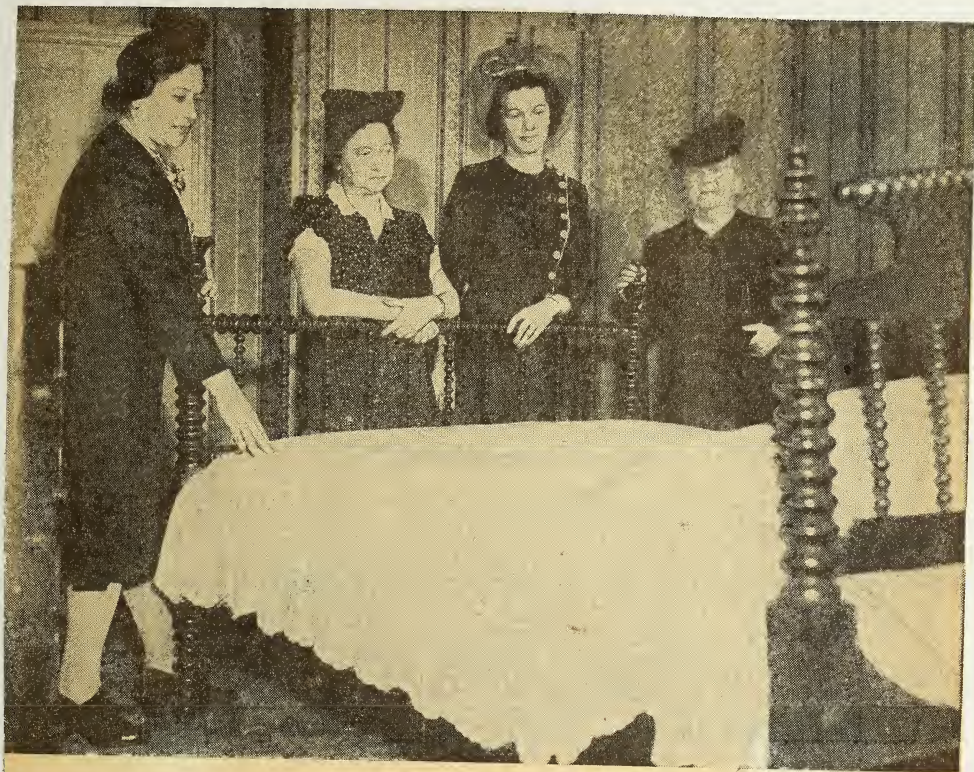
Globe

Read It or Not

Abraham Lincoln died in the same  
bed slept in by his assassin, John  
Wilkes Booth. This was in Peterson's  
boarding house at 516 10th st, diag-  
onally across from the Ford Theatre.  
Booth had previously occupied the  
room and bed into which Lincoln  
was placed and died.

My dear Dr. Warren:  
Do you believe the  
above story?

Sincerely  
Wm L. PALMER



### Display at Chicago Historical Society Honors Lincoln

A special display in honor of the great war leader on his birthday tomorrow has been prepared by the Historical Society, where the bed on which Lincoln died is viewed by (left to right) Mrs. Rose Goldstein, Mrs. Nellie Pinsonneault, Mrs. Josephine L. Scivally and Mrs. Rose Simmons, who are members of the Graduate Club of the adult education classes conducted by the Board of Education. The bed is in a reproduction of the Petersen house bedroom.

(Story on page 19.)

*Chicago Tribune*  
2/1/19





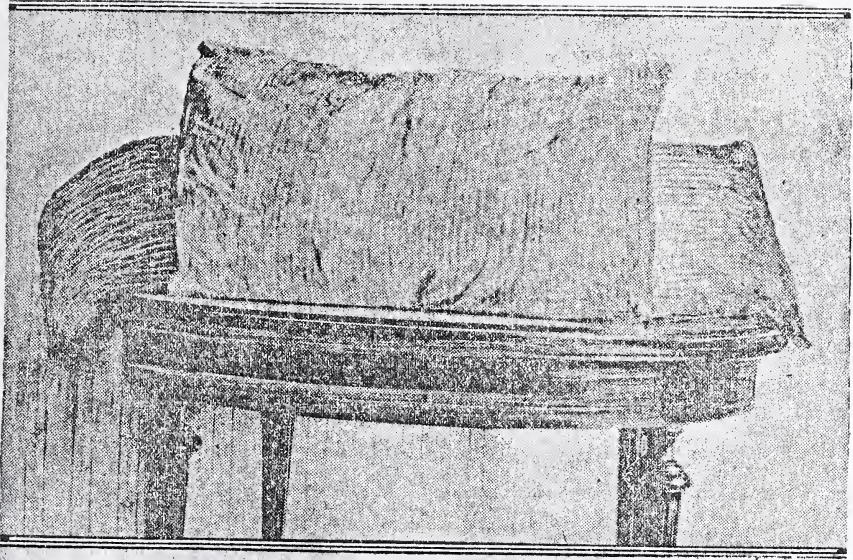
#### STUDENTS VIEW LINCOLN'S DEATH BED

A group of students from Trumbull School view the bed on which Abraham Lincoln died after being shot by the assassin at Ford's Theater in the capital. The bed and other things connected with his life are being displayed at the Chicago Historical Society, Clark st. and North av. The exhibit opens tomorrow, birthday of the Civil War President.

SUN PHOTO.

THE CHICAGO SUN, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1947





Pillow and Bolster from the Deathbed of Lincoln.

